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ABSTRACT

Testimony concerning Senate Bill 1595 includes statements submitted by Senator Daniel Inouye, from the Select Committee on Indian Affairs, and S. Timothy Wapato, Commissioner, Administration for Native Americans, Department of Health and Human Services. The bill in question aims to preserve and enhance the ability of Alaska Natives to speak and understand their languages through support of efforts originating in the native communities. Senator Inouye's statement offers background information on the languages considered, explains briefly the process whereby grants to Alaska Native organizations are considered, outlines the legislation's history, provides a section-by-section analysis of the legislation, reviews costs, and gives a brief regulatory impact statement. The statement by S. Timothy Wapato expresses support for the concept behind the bill but expresses concerns about establishment of a new grant program and grant matching requirements. (MSE)

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102-213

PRESERVING AND ENHANCING THE ABILITY OF ALASKA NATIVES TO SPEAK AND UNDERSTAND THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGES

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NOVEMBER 13, 1991.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. INOUYE, from the Select Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 1595]

The Select Committee on Indian Affairs, to which was referred the bill (S. 1595) to preserve and enhance the ability of Alaska Natives to speak and understand their native languages, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and recommends that the bill as amended do pass.

PURPOSE

The purpose of S. 1595 is to preserve and enhance the ability of Alaska Natives to speak and understand their languages.

BACKGROUND

A comprehensive review of the extent, history, and probable fate of Alaska's indigenous languages can be found in Michael Krauss' "Alaska Native Languages: Past, Present, and Future" (Alaska Native Language Center Research Papers, Number 4). There are twenty separate indigenous languages in Alaska. Alaska is the birthplace of two great North American language families: the Eskimo-Aleut and the Athabaskan-Eyak-Tlingit. Both of these language groups have spread far beyond Alaska. In both language families the greatest diversity is found in Alaska.

In the Eskimo-Aleut family are the Aleut and Eskimo languages, the latter divided between Yupik and Inupiaq. Within Yupik is Siberian and Central Yupik and Alutiiq (Pacific Gulf Yupik). In Ath-

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abaskan-Eyak-Tlingit there is Tlingit and Eyak and 11 Athabaskan languages. Alaska also has Haida and Tsimshian speaking peoples. The Haida are thought to have migrated into Alaska from Canada at about the same time the Europeans began to arrive. The Tsimshian arrived in Alaska with the missionary William Duncan and are established on the Annette Island—the Metlakatla Indian Community.

A list of the twenty Alaska Native languages follows. The numbers of speakers of each language was estimated in 1980 by Dr. Michael Krauss, Director of the Alaska Native Language Center at Fairbanks, Alaska.

Language, Tsimshian; population, 1,000; speakers, 200; geographic area, Metlakatla; youngest speaker, 50's; estimated date of death, 2015.

Language, Haida; population, 500; speakers, 100; geographic area, Hydaburg and Ketchikan; youngest speaker, 50's; estimated date of death, 2015.

Language, Tlingit; population, 10,000; speakers, 2,000; geographic area, southeastern Alaska; youngest speaker, 40's; estimated date of death, 2030.

Language, Eyak; population, 50; speakers, 3; geographic area, Copper River delta area; youngest speaker, 70's; estimated date of death, 2000.

Language, Ahtna Athabaskan; population, 500; speakers, 200; geographic area, Copper River area; youngest speaker, 30's; estimated date of death, 2030.

Language, Tanaina (Athabaskan); population, 900; speakers, 250; geographic area, Cook Inlet region; youngest speaker, teens; estimated date of death, 2055 (only at Lime Village).

Language, Ingalik (Athabaskan); population, 300; speakers, 100; geographic area, Middle Kuskokwim area (Anvik, Shageluk, Holy Cross); youngest speaker, 30's; estimated data of death, 2030.

Language, Holikachuk (Athabaskan); population, 160; speakers, 25; geographic area, Yukon/Kuskokwim; youngest speaker, 50's; estimated date of death, 2015.

Language, Koyukon (Athabaskan); population, 2,200; speakers, 700; geographic area, Middle Yukon River/Koyukuk River; youngest speaker, 30's; estimated date of death, 2035.

Language, Upper Kuskokwim (Athabaskan); population, 150; speakers, 140; geographic area, Upper Kuskokwim River; youngest speaker, children at Nikolai and Telida; estimated date of death, 2055.

Language, Tanana (Athabaskan); population, 350; speaker, 100; geographic area, Tanana River—Fairbanks area; youngest speaker, 50's; estimated date of death, 2015.

Language, Tanacross (Athabaskan); population, 160; speakers, 100; geographic area, middle Tanana River—Healy Lake, Dot Lake, tanacross; youngest speaker, teens; estimated date of death, 2055.

Language, Upper Tanana (Athabaskan); population, 300; speakers, 250; geographic area, upper Tanana River; youngest speaker, teens; estimated date of death, 2055.

Language, Han (Athabaskan); population, 50; speakers, 20; geographic area, Eagle; youngest speaker, 30's; estimated date of death, 2030.

Language, Kutchin (Athabaskan); population, 1,200 (in Alaska); speakers, 700; geographic area, Porcupine River—ANWR area; youngest speaker, teens; estimated date of death, 2055.

Language, Aleut; population, 2,000; speakers, 700; geographic area, Aleutian Islands; youngest speaker, 20's; estimated date of death, indefinitely under ideal conditions (Atka only).

Language, Alutiiq; population, 3,000; speakers, 1,000; geographic area, Prince William Sound, Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak Island, Alaska Peninsula; youngest speaker, teens; estimated date of death, 2055 (at English Bay only).

Language, Central Yupik; population, 17,000; speakers, 14,000; geographic area, Bristol Bay, Kuskokwim Delta, Yukon Delta; youngest speaker, children still learning, particularly in Kuskokwim area; estimated date of death, possibly indefinitely.

Language, Siberian Yupik; population, 1,000; speakers, 1,000; geographic area, St. Lawrence Island; youngest speaker, spoken by entire population; estimated date of death, possibly indefinitely.

Language, Inupiaq; population, 12,000; speakers, 5,000; geographic area, North Slope and Seward Peninsula; youngest speaker, teens; estimated date of death, 2055—the language family will survive indefinitely in Canada and Greenland, however, these branches are not mutually intelligible.

The history of Alaska's Native languages since contact with the Russians and later the Americans has been predominantly one of steady decline in numbers of speakers. The only improvement in the status of these languages is that they have been put into written form.

The Russians established themselves in Alaska around 1745. Their influence over Alaska Natives (and their languages) was primarily limited to the Aleuts and later the Pacific Gulf Yupik and to some extent the Central Yupiks, Tanaina Athabaskans and Tlingits. This contact, while not necessarily targeting these languages for extermination, had a profound negative effect due to the brutality exhibited towards the native peoples and their subsequent decline in population.

In the early 1800's a period of relative enlightenment in the Russian rule of the area resulted in the beginnings of literacy for Alaska Natives. The Russian Orthodox Church and its educational system strengthened the status of native languages by putting them in written form. Religious texts were translated into Aleut, Tlingit, and Central Yupik. Widespread literacy for these cultures followed and in the case of Aleut a secular writing tradition began.

The U.S. purchased Alaska from the Russians in 1867, and initially, the tradition of publishing in Alaska Native languages was continued by the missionaries. Unfortunately, a new policy was initiated in the 1880's under the first Commissioner of Education for Alaska, Sheldon Jackson, a Pesbyterian missionary. Jackson was opposed to the use of Native languages in education or religion.

Jackson encouraged the mission schools under his influence to cease translating and teaching in Native languages. The United States Bureau of Education, which administered most schools for Alaska by the early 1900's followed this policy as well. Schools completely forbade the use of Native languages and children were often physically punished for speaking their languages in school.

Parents were actively discouraged from speaking their Native languages to their children.

There was complete suppression of Native languages from about 1910 to 1960. The school system was transferred to the Bureau of Indian Affairs during this period.

In the 1960's a period of rebirth in the interest of Alaska Native languages began. This developed into a movement with Natives in the State calling for increased educational instruction in their languages in the classroom and for native parents to renew speaking their languages to their children in the home.

In 1967 a Federal Bilingual Education Act was enacted permitting instruction in languages other than English in public schools. In 1970 the Bureau of Indian Affairs, together with the State-Operated School System, was persuaded to begin a bilingual education program in four Central Yupik schools.

In 1972 the Alaska State Legislature enacted a pair of bills relating to Alaska Native languages. The first stipulated that every school with 15 or more students whose dominant language was other than English must have a teacher who is fluent in that language, a program and written materials in that language. However, at the time most Alaska Natives attended Bureau of Indian Affairs schools which were not affected by the law (schools have since been turned over to the State).

The second bill established the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. The Center, which is responsible for the scientific study of Alaska's indigenous languages, has been instrumental in developing curricula and other materials to aid in language preservation. It has also helped train writers and teachers in Native languages.

Despite these encouraging steps in recognizing the importance of Alaska's indigenous languages, progress on a broad scale has not been realized. Many school administrators and teachers are reluctant to using Native languages in their schools and many languages face imminent extinction.

The proposed legislation is intended to provide a different approach to the preservation of Alaska Native languages. Only Alaska Natives can truly preserve their languages. They must pass these languages on to their children if they are to survive. Because many languages have so few speakers left, the traditional method of passing the language from parent to child may not always be possible. However, communities can bring speakers and non-speakers together in many ways that will facilitate language preservation. This legislation emphasizes the role of communities in preserving their languages.

Senator Murkowski introduced S. 1595 on July 31, 1991 in response to Alaska Natives' requests that they receive support in their fight to save their languages. The bill was the subject of a field hearing held before the Select Committee on Indian Affairs on October 19, 1991 in Anchorage, Alaska.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT

The Committee amendment to S. 1595 made two changes. The first is intended to assure that urban Alaska Native organizations

are eligible to apply for grants. The second is intended to assure that the results of projects funded under this program are maintained for the benefit of future generations.

CONSIDERATION OF GRANT APPLICATIONS

In considering grant applications for this program the Committee expects that the Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans will give primary consideration to grants which utilize expertise developed in the State. In keeping with the spirit of the legislation to preserve all Alaska Native languages that can be preserved, the Committee expects the Commissioner to provide, insofar as possible, a balanced program of grants to save languages throughout the state. The Committee anticipates that the central depository for Alaska Native language materials will be the Alaska Native Language Center, the State's only language center that deals with all Alaska Native languages.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

S. 1595 was introduced July 31, 1991 by Senator Murkowski and was referred to the Select Committee on Indian Affairs. The Committee held a field hearing in Anchorage, Alaska on S. 1595 on October 19, 1991.

In open business session on November 5, 1991, the Select Committee on Indian Affairs, by unanimous vote of a quorum present, ordered the bill, with an amendment, reported with the recommendation that the Senate pass the bill as amended.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Sec. 1. Short Title.—This section sets forth the short title as "Alaska Native Languages Preservation and Enhancement Act of 1991."

Sec. 2. Grant Program.—Amends the Native American Programs Act of 1974 to insert a new section which establishes a grant program administered by the Administration for Native Americans to preserve and enhance Alaska Native languages.

(a) Grants are to be awarded to Alaska Native villages, consortiums of villages, regional corporations or urban Alaska Native organizations.

(b) Grant funds can be used for the construction and conversion of facilities to be used as language centers, the establishment of community language programs, teacher training programs, and other projects aimed at Native languages preservation.

(c) Grants are awarded on the basis of applications submitted by groups named in subsection (a).

(d) Grants shall cover 90% of project costs and that 10% shall come from another funding source, including the provision of property or services.

(e) Directs the Secretary to administer the program through the Administration for Native Americans.

Sec. 3. Authorization of Appropriations.—Makes necessary amendments to Native American Programs Act and authorizes funds necessary to carry out grant program.

COST AND BUDGETARY CONSIDERATION

The cost estimate for S. 1595, as amended, as calculated by the Congressional Budget Office is set forth below:

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

1. Bill number: S. 1595.
2. Bill Title: Alaska Native Languages Preservation and Enhancement Act of 1991.
3. Bill Status: As ordered reported by the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs on November 5, 1991.
4. Bill Purpose: S. 1595 would authorize funding for grants to enable Alaska Native organizations to preserve their native languages. The grants would be provided for purposes that would enhance the ability of Alaska Natives to speak native languages and preserve and expand the knowledge of these languages.
5. Estimated cost to the Federal Government

[By fiscal year, in millions of dollars]

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Authorization level	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Estimated outlays	0.9	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.5

The costs of this bill fall within budget function 500.

Basis of estimate: S. 1595 authorizes for appropriation $2.5 million for the preservation and enhancement of the ability of Alaska Natives to speak and understand their native languages, for each of the fiscal years 1992 through 1996.

Estimated outlays assume full appropriation of the amounts authorized in the bill.

6. Pay-as-you-go considerations: The Budget Enforcement Act of 1990 sets up pay-as-you-go procedures for legislation affecting direct spending or receipts through 1995. CBO estimates that enactment of S. 1595 would not affect spending or receipts. Therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply to the bill.
7. Estimated cost to State and local governments: None.
8. Estimate comparison: None.
9. Previous CBO estimate: None.
10. Estimate prepared by: Joshua Leichter (226–2800).
11. Estimate approved by: C.G. Nuckols for James L. Blum, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENT

Paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI, of the Standing rules of the Senate requires each report accompanying a bill to evaluate the regulatory and paperwork impact that would be incurred in carrying out the bill. The Committee believes that S. 1595 will have minimal regulatory or paperwork impact.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

The Administration for Native Americans submitted the following testimony on S. 1595.

STATEMENT BY S. TIMOTHY WAPATO, COMMISSIONER, ADMINISTRATION FOR NATIVE AMERICANS, ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for the record on S. 1595, the "Alaska Native Languages Preservation and Enhancement Act of 1991." This legislation would enhance the ability of Alaskan Natives to speak their native languages, and also preserve and expand knowledge about such languages. Preserving a group's language and ensuring its continuation is an important step toward strengthening that group's identity.

The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) fully supports the concept behind this bill, because the continuation of a native language is an important element in the social development of Alaskan Natives' cultures. However, we do not support the establishment of a new grant program within ANA, since we already have sufficient authority to carry out the bill's purpose under the Native American Programs Act of 1974.

In addition, we have several other concerns about this legislation. We object to the 10 percent grantee match as proposed in Section 803B(d) of S. 1595. The Administration strongly urges the Congress to amend this section to reflect a 20 percent matching requirement by the grantee in order to be consistent with other grant authorities under the Native American Programs Act. Moreover, we object to any use of other Federal dollars to satisfy the required grantee match.

The goal of the Native American Programs Act is to promote social and economic self-sufficiency among Native populations. This goal is sufficiently broad to encompass the purposes of preserving native culture and language, and ANA already provides funding to eligible organizations for this purpose under the Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS) program.

The SEDS approach has strengthened the capacity of Native American communities to address their long-term social, economic and governance needs. Recognizing the particular needs of Alaskan Natives, ANA implemented a special Alaska social and economic initiative to provide financial assistance at the village level in 1984. Furthermore, beginning in fiscal year 1991, eligible Alaskan Native organizations were allowed to compete in the general ANA program announcement. Alaskan-specific grants totaled over $4 million in FY 1991.

Since Alaska Native Corporations were officially recognized only 20 years ago, cultural heritage programs have just recently emerged in Alaska. Language is a common

theme central to most of these projects. As a result, the Administration for Native Americans is receiving an increasing number of applications from Alaskan Native villages and organizations in order to further enhance and strengthen tribal government through cultural heritage preservation activities.

I also am pleased to report that over the past several years there has been a significant cultural renaissance in Native American communities. In response to this trend, ANA developed a priority area in its Coordinated Discretionary Program (CDP) to develop Native American Cultural Centers. Four grants were awarded for this purpose in FY 1991. Language preservation and enhancement were included in these projects.

In summary, language preservation and enhancement is important to the continuation of our Native cultures. ANA will continue efforts to promote these activities throughout the Native American community, and believes this legislation is unnecessary.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on this important legislation.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with subsection 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee states that the enactment of S. 1595 will not result in the repeal or amendment of any existing law.

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